possible for them in the shortest space of time, and at various parts of the front, to develop an offensive without betraying their plans by their preparations. The photographs of the enemy's field defences and works, and the continual checking and verification by new photographs secured by our aviators, could therefore only give general indications of his intended movements.

The French Front between Vailly on the Aisnc and the Argonne was particularly well constructed, so that special preparations for attack were not necessary. We saw the works that were actually built south of the Chemin des Dames when we advanced in 1918. Their construction seems to have dated from 1915-1916. It is possible that the French had intended to make an offensive here in 1916 but were prevented by the German on-slaught at Verdun."*

It is acknowledged that the ground thus added to the front which was to be attacked presented ex-ceptional difficulties. It was a plateau which had natural advantages for the construction of a system of defences and the Germans had made the most of their opportunities and converted this high ground into a system of entrenchments which constituted the most formidable fortress on the whole front. But General Nivelle reckoned that even that fact in itself was an element in his favour when a surprise attack was con-

templated. The German would not expect that an offensive would be launched on the strongest point in the whole line when there were so many more accessible points on either side. They would therefore take no special precautions either in the way of

* " My War Memories," General Ludendorff, Vol. II, p. 410.